



HUSTLE AND FLOW: THE ARKANSAS RIVER GETS ITS BIG START NEAR 14,433-FOOT MT. ELBERT.

## 3 WAYS TO SEE Central Colorado

By Logan Kugler

### BIKE TOUR

PEDAL HUT-TO-HUT IN THE SAWATCH PEAKS

First things first: This ride is not easy. You'll hammer steep terrain at 8,000 feet and up. But consider the reward—overnight stays in Colorado's historic (and posh, in our book) 10th Mountain Division Huts. Start at the Vail Pass trailhead 5 miles west of Copper Mountain Resort (I-70 exit 190) and saddle up for an epic 39 miles to the Fowler Hilliard Hut at 11,500 feet. Pack lightly, and you won't need panniers or a BOB trailer. On day 2, you have options. Feel like going big? Pump 39 miles to the hut just east of the Continental Divide at 11,370 feet. Prefer to relax in a sauna? Cruise 21 miles to Vance's Cabin and stoke the wood-burning bathhouse. Either way, park a shuttle car at the Crane Park trailhead south of Leadville. Summer bookings start October 1 ([www.huts.org](http://www.huts.org)).

### PADDLE

RAFT THE ROWDY ARKANSAS RIVER

The 100-mile stretch of Arkansas River starting just east of 14,421-foot Mt. Massive is the wildest section on the nation's fourth longest river. Its class III and IV rapids rock through the 1,500-foot sheer canyon walls of Royal Gorge. The best guided trips put in at a boat launch known as "the numbers" at the end of a dirt road heading west from mile 199.9 on CO 24. Day 1 offers immediate returns with six class IV rapids in the first 5 miles. You'll rollick through another 16 boulder-choked miles before claiming a campsite on river right. Get ready for steaks and Dutch-oven desserts before falling asleep to the sounds of the river. Wake early the next day and continue downstream for 19 deep canyon miles before takeout at Echo Canyon. \$395; [www.raftecho.com](http://www.raftecho.com)

### BACKPACK

TREK THE BEST OF THE ELK RANGE

You'll be scouring the classifieds for a local gig after this 22-mile out-and-back in the 2.3-million-acre White River National Forest. Start at the Avalanche Campground just off CO 133 south of Carbondale. Hop onto the Avalanche Trail and follow the cold, clear waters of Avalanche Creek southeast as it carves into one of the area's longest valleys. After 6 miles, take a break just past Hell Roaring Creek at a rock outcropping with dazzling views of the Elk Range and flower-carpeted meadows. The trail climbs steadily through aspen and conifer for the next 4 miles, then gets sadistically steep for the final 2 miles before Avalanche Lake. Set up camp off-trail just below the lake, but be sure to check out the sky working its magic on the water at sunset. [www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver)